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NAPOLEON

"Canal Days To Modern Ways"

Centennial Edition

of

NAPOLEON, OHIO

1863 – 1963

EDITOR–IN–CHIEF.....MARY FRANCES MEEKISON

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We wish to express our appreciation to all who have made this brochure possible, especially to: Mr. Frank Faust, and to Mr. and Mrs. George A. Meekison for their vivid "memory pictures" of the past; to Mr. Paul Fast for helpful advice, to Miss Anthoneta Apel for typing and reading proofs; to all the good citizens who so generously loaned photographs for this publication.

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Mary Frances Meekison
Napoleon, Ohio

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FOREWORD

"The purpose of this brochure is to commemorate a century of progress in Napoleon, from the date of its incorporation in 1863 to the present day. We wish not only to offer a capsule view of the last hundred years or more, but we also want to pay tribute to the loyal and industrious "do it yourself" townsmen of today, who through their own efforts and special talents, sponsored and produced a noteworthy Centennial program and celebration July 3 – 7.

The Editor"

CENTENNIAL COMMITTEES

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CENTENNIAL SLOGAN – John Yaney

FIRST COURT HOUSE, HENRY COUNTY, OHIO.

Long before the arrival of the white man, the moccasined feet of the Indians threaded the wooded forests of Henry County and their bark canoes moved skillfully over the waters of the Maumee River. Possibly the first white men to come here were the French traders and trappers; and the hunters who settled themselves along the banks of the river for temporary periods while they were searching for the game which furnished them a livelihood. There was a deep silence over the "Great Black Swamp" as this area was called in those days. During the day, the dreary scene may have been enlivened only by the gobble of the wild turkey or the sound of the woodpecker tapping. Many of the singing birds that brighten our scene came in with the clearing of the forests and civilization in general.

These early hunters made no effort to subdue nature. The rifle and the dog were generally their only companions; the hunt and the trap their only means of support. Finally came the man with the ax; in his footsteps followed the saw mill. Monster oaks, which rose a hundred feet and more above, were felled and rafted to Canada, then across the Atlantic, where they were made into vessels to plow through the stormy seas.

No great battles were fought on local soil in the conquest of this land from the red men, but it echoed to the tread of the army of Wayne, and in 1812 to the troops of Winchester and General Harrison. A portion of Henry County was the last of the hunting grounds of the Indians in this valley. Part of Henry County was a reservation of the Ottawa Indians. The three chiefs of this tribe, ranking in the order named, were: Oxinoxica, Wauseon, and Myo. The latter, Myo, was known to be exceedingly wise and very cunning. He died on the Maumee and his skull was preserved for many years by Dr. L. L. Patrick, one of the pioneer physicians who had the courage to combat malaria and the "shakes" along the Maumee.

Because the Indians had neither the advantages of the destructive weapons nor the numerical strength of their enemies, they finally had to submit and be dictated to by their new masters. The pleasant hunting grounds, where they formerly chased the deer and the bear in Henry County, became the possession of aliens of a different color. No longer could the red man stretch before the sparkling fire along the banks of the Maumee. No longer would be heard the cheerful notes of his flute or the more coarse tom-tom of his crude drum echoing from the wooded groves along the river bank. Their hearts were full of gloom, when the removal to their new homes in the west began, and some of the Indians declared that *never* would they leave their beloved Maumee Valley.

About the time the Ottawa Indians were removed to their western homes beyond the Mississippi (1830), the first inventory of the inhabitants of the settlement of Henry County was made. The census takers found 260 persons. The decade prior, it has been assumed, there were not more than twelve families in the county. And three of the twelve family units answered to the name Bowers.

In 1832 when Napoleon became the county seat, there were only a few residents who had been attracted by the beauty of the location and the fertility of the soil It was a crossroads settlement, with several log cabins huddled close together. According to the best information, the first dwelling was a log cabin, 12 x 14, owned by Mr. Huston or Mr. Andrews. Then, two years later, Mr. George Stout joined the community and built a two-story log cabin, which he opened for the traveling public. It was in the dining room of this tavern, which stood on the rear of the lot now occupied by the Napoleon Laundry, that the first two or three terms of the Common Pleas Court were held, and the first grand jury slept in the haymow in the barn.

Shortly afterwards, Mr. Stout erected a rear addition to his tavern for the purpose of providing a proper place for the holding of court, and for the administration of the affairs of the county. As court was held semi-annually,

and then for a few days at a time, the landlord enjoyed full possession of the room the remainder of the year. After the adjournment of court, it was the custom to hold an old–fashioned "shindig", where the officials, tenants, litigants, and witnesses freely partook of the liquid refreshments.

This old log addition served the county's needs until 1844, when a plain *frame* two–story affair with court rooms on the second floor was built for $2,000.00. This was destroyed by fire in April 1847 and all the valuable records of the county were lost. The first jail, a log affair, stood just south of our present jail and on the south side of the canal also. It was from this log jail that three desparadoes escaped by burning a hole through the ceiling with a red poker, heated repeatedly in the stove, concealing the burned spot with bread crumbs until the job was completed. Then all three helped each other through a small opening into the attic; from there they dived through an open window. It appeared to be a "clean getaway" but they were caught later and lynched in California. Until a suitable jail was built, prisoners were taken to Maumee.

The second courthouse was built a few years later on the two adjoining lots for $7,495.75. This new structure was brick. It was small and quaint with an impressive entrance of white pillars, bell tower and spire. The jail was on the side on the ground floor, where anyone could walk up to the grated windows, converse with the prisoners, and through the bars hand them anything from a short gun or a jug of whiskey to a set of burglar tools. "The Dutch Row Fire" of 1879 destroyed it. The present courthouse was completed in 1882 for the sum of $95,000.00 plus $20,000.00 for the county jail, both of which remain in use.

Three small frame houses were in Napoleon in 1837. Agricultural potentialities in this area had not been realized because of the lack of adequate transportation to the more heavily populated and industrialized eastern cities.

The completion of the Miami–Erie Canal (1843), which passed through Napoleon, proved to be the factor that would alleviate this situation. It fostered the development of the town in population and industry. It was operated until the turn of the century, but was profitably used by the State of Ohio only until the appearance of the railroads. However, the canal did stimulate settlement and this, in turn, brought about the artificial drainage of ditches and tile. Thus the great Black Swamp area was reclaimed, bringing about through time the fruitful agricultural area we enjoy today. Most of the canal bed now has been drained and certain segments have become part of Route 24. Yet, evidence of the past, wooden canal locks still stand at Independence, Ohio.

One might say that the town of Napoleon was "born fighting". The corporate existence of the town was delayed because of agitation over a change of the name from Napoleon, which did not suit the majority of inhabitants, to Henry, Ohio. They desired a name "more expressive of things American", as that of the Virginian statesman, Patrick Henry. When a petition to change the name was presented, Dr. Lorenzo L. Patrick acted as agent for the petitioners. However, the friends of the name "Napoleon"were determined to oppose the petition. They were led by Augustin Pilliod, a Frenchman and prominent citizen, who preferred the name of the distinguished French warrior. On election day of 1853, when the city officials were to be chosen, they made such a demonstration that the election could not proceed. Proceedings were stopped and the meeting was adjourned for a year. The newspaper, *Northwest*, had even dropped Napoleon and substituted *Henry* in its headline. The excitement died away but the incorporation was delayed a decade. In 1863 Mr. Pilliod gathered 150 signatures of residents and taxpayers and presented again his petition that the town be incorporated as Napoleon. The commissioners accepted and passed the issue. This action enabled the enlargement of the corporate limits and the inclusion of land and business interests in locality known as South Napoleon. Justin Tyler was elected the first mayor. Other officials included Dan Yarnell, George Bogart, and Henry Kaho, councilmen.

In the year of its incorporation, there were hardly a dozen stores in the entire town and very little manufacturing. Yet, two decades later there were more industries, more mercantile businesses than now, in proportion to the inhabitants. Here are a few of the early mercantile and other business interests:

On the west side of Perry Street:

1. C. H. Suydam, boots and shoes
2. R. Hudson, harness store
3. Eggers and Son, restaurant and saloon
4. Frease Brothers, jewelers
5. A. J. Vanderbrock (now Augenstein and Hoeffel's)
6. Isa Leist, drugs
7. H. C. Groschener, general hardware
8. Saur and Balsley, drugs
9. Shoemaker Brothers, dry goods
10. D. J. Humprey, drugs
11. Henry Meyer, merchant clothing
12. H. A. Meyerholtz and Brother, groceries
13. Multon and Fate, saloon
14. M. Reiser, boots, shoes, rubber goods.

On the east side of Perry Street:

1. Conrad Bitzer, furniture and undertaking (cor. Perry and Clinton)
2. John Deimer, meat market
3. William Spangler, groceries and saloon
4. Anthony Hahn, tobaccos
5. David Meekison, banker
6. John Hahn, saloon

On the north side of Washington Street:

1. Pohlman Brothers, meat market
2. J. W. Tietjen, cigars
3. F. W. Rohrs, saloon
4. Redderson and Westhoven, meat market
5. Norden and Bruns, dry goods

The first industry in Napoleon was a saw mill built in 1843. This was followed by a flour mill, which obtained its motive power by water from the Miami–Erie Canal, in 1850. John Ritter was the owner. Augustin Pilliod founded the Napoleon Flouring Mill in 1856; later sold it to John H. Vocke in 1864. This is still operated by the Vocke family and stands like a giant sentry at the north end of the river bridge. Other early industries were: Vocke's Distillery, Koller's Flouring Mill (an outgrowth of John Ritter's), Napoleon Woolen Mill, Sayger's Saw–mill, The Napoleon Brewery, Bruner's Hoop Factory (for barrels), Theisen and Hildred's Planing Mills, Napoleon Foundry, Tile and Brick Works, Miller's Carriage Works, Shaff's Carriage Works, Napoleon Machine Works, Napoleon Boat Oar Factory, and Shoemaker and Zaenger's Cigar Factory.

The Heller–Aller Company, founded in 1887, was at one time the largest and most influential concern of its kind in the United States, manufacturing windmills, pumps and water tanks. This business is still in operation on the corner of Perry and Oakwood Avenue.

A present Napoleon resident, Frank Faust. alert citizen and dean of newspapermen of this area, recalls South Napoleon as it was around 1879. On the northeast corner of Perry and Maumee, there was a big yellow saloon. Where the Napoleon Service Plaza now stands, there were luscious tobacco fields; next to this, a slaughter house with an entrance on the river bank. Further east, there was a brickyard. Across the street, corner of Perry and East Maumee, was Tite Mann's General Store. Where the South Community Bank stands today was Gearhardt's General Store. Mr. Gearhardt is said to have been the owner of South Napoleon's only industry, an ashery. Since wood was the only fuel, ashes were collected from residences and used in manufacture of potash, an ingredient in making soap. The ashery was on the corner of Perry and West Maumee.

Napoleon's first hotel, the Wann House, was located near where the Sheriff's residence now stands and served canal boat travelers. Next there was the Vocke House, a hotel located near the Wabash Depot for rail passengers. Joe Stout also built a sizeable two-story frame hotel where the Wellington stands, called Stout House. This structure was moved to where Mitchell's Greenhouse now stands and was known as Bade House. The first brick hotel, presently known as The Wellington, was originally called Miller House. It carried the reputation of a "first-class hostelry" and when it was sold to Michael Donnelly and E. N. Warden, the hotel was renamed The Wellington, after the Duke of Wellington.

The first, bank, known as the First National Bank, was established in 1872 with a capitol stock of $50,000. by Blair. The J. C. Saur Bank followed; then the Citizen's Bank, a private concern. In 1886 The Meekison Bank opened, where the Murphy Store stands today, and a few years later, the head of this bank, David Meekison, established the second First National Bank on the corner of Washington and Clinton Streets. Mr. Meekison was its first President for several years. Somewhat later, this bank merged with the Napoleon State Bank. The Community Bank is located in this spot today.

In 1845 a futile attempt was made to start a newspaper in Napoleon by Martin Schruck, who issued a small paper called the Journal. Its life was short. In September 1852, the first permanent newspaper, christened, The Northwest, appeared in Napoleon. It was small and carried less than a column of advertisement. Circulation was poor for a while, but several years later under John Haag's management, it became an influential factor in the community's life. Luther L. Orwig became owner in 1875 and it remained in the family under the wise editorship of Gale, and then, Don Orwig. It was one of the leading county journals in this section of the state. The paper was a Democratic publication. Fire destroyed the plant in 1859. The type metal was collected and taken to a foundry, where it was cast into cannon. In firing it at a celebration, this cannon seriously mutilated five or six men. During a subsequent political meeting at a school house, it exploded, but caused no serious injuries. Whether it was a democratic or republican explosion is not known.

The Signal made its appearance in 1865 and was such a vigorous republican organ that it attracted the party patronage. It was sold several times, then finally was purchased by J. P. Belknap. Northwestern Ohio history books call it a "splendid newspaper". Upon the death of Don Orwig, owner and astute editor, of the Northwest in 1959, the two weekly papers merged to form the Northwest-Signal, a daily paper edited by Nat Belknap and John Orwig.

Due to the large German settlement around Napoleon, a German language paper was published in 1867, called *Der Demokratischer Wegweiser*, but a bit later moved to Toledo. *The Deutsche Demokrat*, founded twelve years later, was printed until 1930 and was edited by Otto Evers.

It is rather startling today to realize that from the first settlement of the town in 1832 and prior, people crossed the river in a boat if at all. Then in 1862, Joe Morris ran a ferry boat, charging a toll of fifteen cents for one horse, buggy, and driver. The first bridge in 1862 was one covered with shingles. It was the time of the Civil War. Carpenters finished the bridge one day, enlisted the next, and never returned. When this structure was rendered "unsafe" in 1877. a second wooden bridge, without cover, with four spans supported by iron rods, was built. Floods and ice swept this away a year later. The next year a three-span steel bridge was built and this stood for fifty years until the present one of steel and concrete was built for $350,000.00

The first fire department was not set up until 1870. The first efficient fire apparatus consisted of a steam engine, named "Old Betsy Jane". This, plus fire hose, cost $4,600.00. Water was originally supplied by can and river or underground cisterns. The first firehouse was a wooden structure on East Washington. After this burned down, a three story brick structure, which still stands across from the Sheriff's residence, was erected in 1875 for $3,000.00. Today the Fire Department is located in the City Building on West Main Street.

The earliest U. S. Post Office stood where the present jail and sheriff's residence is now. Wann House, the first hotel, was just east of this. Henry Taylor was the first postmaster. The post office, in the years that followed, was moved to a series of locations on Washington Street, then to the Miller House, now The Wellington, back to Washington Street in the Heller Building and finally in 1932 to the present site.

At first, mail was brought from Maumee, where lake vessels stopped. Service was irregular, often carried by hunters. The Canal boats carried the mail when they started, later the Wabash Railroad took the contract. Rural delivery was begun in 1901. City carriers were put on in 1908. Phillip Yarnell, a rural carrier, received $40.00 a month; furnished his own rig, two horses and wagon, which traveled twenty-five miles round trip.

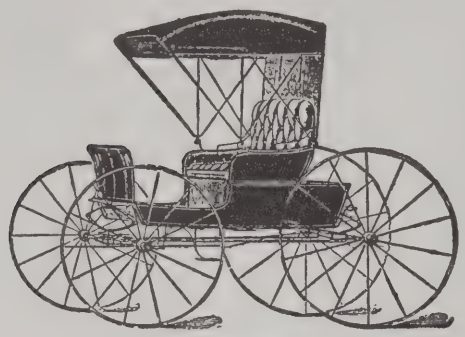
Native Napoleonites might easily claim that theirs has been a "do it yourself" town, since the Waterworks, the Light Plant, and the local hospital have been municipally owned and operated from the beginning.

Prior to 1894 drinking water was pumped out of surface wells, more or less unsanitary, owing to the lack of sewage disposal and the growing population. In 1894 a bond issue for $40,000.00 was issued. Because they could not be readily disposed of in Henry County, David Meekison, then Mayor, took the bonds to Chicago where they were sold to bankers. In this way, the Waterworks and Light Plant were made available and opened for use in 1895.

The Wabash Railroad was completed in 1855. In order to facilitate its construction, rails and locomotives were transported via the Miami-Erie Canal from Toledo to Defiance and set up there. When the property was deeded to the railroad by a member of the Stout family, it was stipulated that a passenger train could not pass through Napoleon without stopping. At one time a fast train breezed through the town without stopping. The former owner was so incensed that she contacted the railroad, showed them the deed, and henceforth no other

Wabash passenger trains snubbed the town.

Though there is no deed recorded in Napoleon by the D. T. & I. Railroad, their trains have traveled through here since 1896. The railroad was taken over by Henry Ford in 1920.



TOP BUGGY

MEDICAL PROFESSION

The long list of early pioneer physicians in this area is most impressive. Dr. William Barry, the first doctor, was also engaged in the legal profession and held many other posts of trust. Napoleon with a population of less than 4,000 had nine doctors in 1888. Some of the doctors' names may be remembered from the past, through kinship or tales of yesteryear, with such names as: Drs. Lorenzo Patrick, John Bloomfield, Eugene Harrison, Alfred Maerker, James Haly and Shoemaker. In the not so long ago, there were other physicians that served the community faithfully and well, such as: Drs. Charles and Frank Harrison, Drs. Henry Rohrs, J. R. Boles and Thomas Quinn.

It is impressive to note that for 105 years, through five generations, the Harrison family has been administering through the practice of medicine to the community of Napoleon.

In the early history of Napoleon, three women doctors played significant roles in the medical field. Dr. A. P. Saur practiced medicine in a three-room office on the west side of the Saur home, which stood next to the Post Office until it was razed several years ago to make way for a city parking lot. This house, often referred to as the Dan Yarnell house, was the oldest home in the west section of town. Dr. Saur moved her practice to Chicago and when she died several years ago, the front page of the *Chicago Tribune* saluted her as a most "distinguished physician." Dr. Mary Kettring, a graduate of Napoleon High in 1882, did missionary work in China but returned to this area in her retirement. Dr. Hulda Sheffield practiced medicine toward the end of the century.

Prior to 1920, sick people were treated in their homes. Operations often were performed on the kitchen table or on the floor. Non-residents who were ill were taken to the city jail for treatment. In 1920 S. M. Heller willed his former home on the corner of Clinton and Scott for a hospital. Furniture and fixtures were obtained through the contribution of citizens.

THE LAW

In reviewing the names of the early bar, there are many that may be familiar to today's residents, such as: Judge J. M. Haag, Judge David Meekison, James Haly, Richard Cahill, James Ragan, James Donovan, John V. Cuff, Michael Donnelly, J. H. Tyler, E. N. Warden, and Judge Theodore Daman. It is most interesting to note that of the four Congressmen elected from Napoleon to serve in Washington, three were Democrats. They were: W. W. Campbell, Republican; D. D. Donovan, David Meekison, and Frank Kniffin, Democrats. The latter, now Referee in Bankruptcy in Toledo, served four terms, from 1930-38. In the early twentieth century years, Michael Donnelly and E. N. Warden served on the bench as Judges of the Court of Appeals, Lima, Ohio.

SOCIAL LIFE

The first theater is reported to have been started in Beckman Hall, where Wendt's Shoe Store is today. At the turn of the century, the Rink Opera House, which offered facilities for roller skating and the theater, was the hub of the town's entertainment world. The theater patrons enjoyed both opera and plays--live from the big cities.

The Henry County Fair, another source of interest, was organized by a group of farmers called Patrons of Husbandry in 1883. The fair was originally held in the Harrison Grange Hall, Harrison Township, and drew 500 people. It was so successful that a fair board was formed, land was purchased in South Napoleon, and a variety of buildings and a grandstand were erected. This annual event occurs every August and is still successful.

OLD HOMES

There are still many lovely, century-old homes in Napoleon. The oldest residence is the Rowan home, now occupied by Miss Anna Rowan, 234 East Front Street. This home, originally built of logs and afterwards sided up, is almost 130 years old. It has always been in Miss Rowan's family and is thought to have been the third house in Napoleon. Across the river, in South Napoleon, homes presently owned by James Murray and B. F. Richard have century-old brick and timber in them. The office-apartment of Dr. Alvin Hahn, across from the Elk's Club, is still in perfect alignment, despite a century of travel before its doors. In the six hundred block of West Clinton Street, there is a brick residence once known as the "Vinegar Works" because vinegar was manufactured there. In that same area, corner of Clinton and Haley, stands the imposing red brick home where Governor Scott spent his last years. The crumbling remains of the Joe Stout house, once an impressive brick mansion with a 75-foot cupola, still stands near the D. T. & I. Railroad at the end of Oakwood Avenue. Over the years this house has been a special point of interest as several history books say it was used as an underground station for the transportation of slaves to the north. The Hancock home, corner of Hobson and Route 24, was used during the Canal boat days by the canal manager of this area.

PUBLIC SCHOOLS

The beginnings of education in Napoleon were indeed humble. School was held in a little log building as early as 1837 with Miss Mary Whipple as teacher. Around 1838, a one–story frame structure, built near the present Courthouse, became "school." Pupils were taught by a young man named Watson.

In the "fifties" another school was built which had two stories and was topped by the now famous bell which has a place of honor on the present school lawn. Salaries at that time ranged from fifty down to eighteen dollars per month. Fire entirely destroyed this school building in 1869. Until 1871, school was held in rented rooms.

The new Union School Building was completed at a cost of $40,000.00 in 1871. It housed 9 rooms on three floors and included "A", "B", and "C" grammar rooms and a German Speaking classroom.

In 1875, Vien Cowdrich accepted the position of Janitor for this building with the following provision, namely: "that he be financially responsible for breakage or damage by freezing in the Building." His salary was six hundred per year. The Superintendent and teacher of the Napoleon Union School, Mr. J. F. Mc Caskey was hired for one hundred and twenty dollars per month at this time.

The South Napoleon brick schoolhouse was erected in 1884 at a cost of $2,540.00. It contained two rooms. The first teachers were Miss Mary E. Barnes and Miss Blanche Leonard.

The present high school was erected in 1921 at a cost of $290,000.00. The auditorium–gymnasium was added in 1935.

Among the many superintendents of Napoleon High School, the names of Ash, Brown, Beck and Brillhart will be recalled by many.

Mr. Hugh Burrough, one of the old grade school custodians, with his family, maintained his residence in the Union School Building.

Today three modern elementary schools are maintained by the Napoleon School District: Central Elementary, where the former Union School stood; C. D. Brillhart School located on the "South–Side," and West School on Woodlawn Avenue.

PUBLIC LIBRARY

A public meeting was called at the Presbyterian Church, June 13, 1907, for the purpose of establishing and maintaining a Public Library in Napoleon. It was organized and a request made to the public for donations of books, magazines, and furniture. The Association Membership fee was set at $1.00 a year per person. Anyone could be a member. Quoted from the local newspaper of June 27, 1907, "If you haven't the dollar, 25 cents for three months, or 10 cents a month. Please give the movement an encouraging word."

Club and private citizens donated books and money. In August, 1907, the Library––a room in the Union School Building––was opened to the public. The Library boasted 250 books in the collection with an average circulation of 75 books per week.

The following year, the Library was moved from the School Building to McGill's Light Office (corner West Washington and Scott) and the book collection had doubled.

In 1909 the subscriptions were sufficient to operate the Library and it was again moved to a room above Fiske's Grocery (now Winzeler's). Businessmen were generous to pay rental for the collection, others provided gift books and equipment.

Frequent moves became a problem. Directors of the Association began to concentrate on a permanent location for a Library. In 1910 the Napoleon School suggested a levy and the following year the Chamber of Commerce reported that Mr. Andrew Carnegie would provide a building if the City would provide the site and maintain the building at a cost of not less than $1,000.00 per year.

Mrs. Sarah Clay donated the property on which the building now stands. In 1912 the building was completed and opened to the Public with a collection of over 2,000 volumes. Service to schools began in 1914.

Service was extended to the County in 1948, the year a one–mill levy was voted for operation of the Library.

Today the Library has holdings of some 50,000 volumes and circulates an average of 160,000 books and magazines per year to Napoleon residents and Henry County. A move to larger quarters is planned sometime in 1963.

WARS

Henry County has been a liberal contributor to all wars in which the U. S. troops have been engaged, dating back to the Mexican War 1846–47.

Shortly after the first shot was fired at Fort Sumpter at the outbreak of the Civil War, April 12, 1861, Henry County responded to President Lincoln's call with Company B of the 38th Regiment with Colonel Edwin Bradley in command. He resigned in 1862 and was succeeded by Edward H. Phelps, later killed in action. The 68th Regiment was made up of a majority of Henry County men. It was organized at Napoleon, November 11, 1861, and they camped at Camp Latty, where the municipal park and golf course are now located. In July, 1862 Colonel R. K. Scott assumed command of the regiment until the close of the war when he was appointed governor of South Carolina.

Edward Crockett, Napoleon, became one of Lincoln's body guards during this era. Another important personage from Napoleon, who not only assumed a major role in the formation of the town, but also gave distinguished service to the state and nation during the Civil War was General James B. Steedman. His statue can be found today in Riverside Park, Toledo.

In World War I, three hundred and forty–four men from Napoleon and Napoleon Township alone served their country. Of these men, John Sickmiller, Carl S. McComb and Robert Reinbolt gave their lives. Fred Sattler, long time news writer, was instrumental in helping to get a plaque erected in the courthouse honoring all World War I servicemen from Henry County.

Ninety out of 2,204 Henry County men made the supreme sacrifice of their lives in World War II. The impact of their loss is still felt in the community, as well as in the hearts of their loved ones.

THE SCOTT STORY

Robert K. Scott might be called one of Napoleon's most illustrious, yet most controversial citizens. As a pioneer, physician, soldier, and statesman, he won success and high honors. After being awarded the title of Major–General in the Civil War, he was sent to South Carolina as commissioner of freedmen, refugees, and abandoned lands. Through his prolonged stay there on official business, he gained residence in South Carolina and General Scott's name was placed in nomination in 1869 for the office of governor by the republican state convention. He was elected to that office by a large majority. Two years later he was re–elected to the same high position.

At that time, South Carolina actually was ruled by federal bayonets, as this was the reconstruction period, and Governor Scott presided over a so–called "carpet–bag" legislature. Many in this group were northern opportunists and newly politically active Negroes. The legislators, on the whole, were interested solely in their own "high living" and in lining their pockets with illegal bribes to the detriment of their fellowmen. We may think some of our modern–day legislators are bad, but those of South Carolina in 1868–72 voted themselves a full–time saloon and restaurant for themselves and their camp followers, which was paid for out of the State Treasury and actually existed in the State House. Such were the colleagues on whom Governor Scott had to depend to transact business of State. Because the times themselves were controversial, the prominent men active in this era were likewise so.

When General Scott returned to Ohio in 1876, he owned 4,000 acres of land in Henry County and, as the story goes, had chests full of currency and silver. By this time the white southerners had regained control of South Carolina. They immediately indicted Ex–Governor Scott for numerous crimes and demanded that he return to their state to stand trial. The successive governors of Ohio refused to allow South Carolina to take him back and thus, South Carolina was never able to try him.

In these days, public relief, public welfare, and pension funds were almost nonexistent. It is reported that upon General Scott's return to Henry County, he gave generously to financially hard pressed widows, orphans, aged and the sick and was also in the forefront in fostering worthy public enterprises.

Ex–military men, politicians, and men of wealth frequently carried pistols during this era in history. Dueling was still practiced in the South. In Napoleon, on the evening of December 25, 1880, General Scott went to look for his only son, "Arkie," who was inclined to frequent the taverns as a young gentleman of leisure. General Scott got involved in an argument with Warren Drury, a friend of his son's, who the General suspected and accused of harboring "Arkie," that he might recover from one of his drunken stupors. Mr. Drury denied admittance to the General. The latter drew his pistol. Drury grabbed for General Scott's hand and either accidentally or intentionally, the gun was discharged. Warren Drury died the next day from his wound.

Tempers ran high in Henry County. Sides were drawn and everyone was either pro or anti Scott. The real facts became hidden in the personalities who were determined to decide Scott's innocence or guilt. Thirty years ago, even, the "old timers" were arguing whether the General was afoot or astride his prize stallion when the fatal shot was fired.

Due to the fact that the burned courthouse was being rebuilt, Scott's trial took place in Beckman Hall, now a pool room over Wendt's Shoe Store. Interest in the affair ran high not only in the county but throughout the nation, because of General Scott's prominence.

The trial resulted in an acquittal for Scott, but as most controversial murder trials end, no one was convinced but the jury. The anti–Scott feeling ran even higher after the jury set him free.

A group of men in Toledo decided to come to Napoleon on the Wabash Railroad and see rough and ready punishment belatedly done by lynching General Scott. This gang called themselves "The Rough's." Scott learned of this action and, accustomed to defending himself, he organized his own small army from his race horse trainers, farm hands, and ex–militia men. The General was determined to defend himself in "Scott Castle" (northwest corner of Clinton and Haley). His principal defense was to come from the second story of his huge, brick home. The yard was mined with dynamite. Scott's men had more dynamite with short fuses on the second floor, to throw at any of the mob.

"The Rough's" started for Napoleon by rail, but someone, name unknown, supplied them with two barrels of whiskey at Maumee and by the time they had reached Liberty Center, their original intent was forgotten. The anti–Scott forces, of course, claimed that General Scott had also "Generaled the whiskey ride."

From the jury's verdict of the Scott trial came the coinage of a new phrase. Because of the great controversy over the decision, forever after when some people thought a guilty man was acquitted, they said, as the term was coined, "He went SCOTT free!"

LANDMARK

Six miles west of Napoleon lies Girty's Island in the Maumee River. It is named for one of three Girty brothers. As children, these brothers were kidnaped by Indians and as adults, joined them in wars and conformed to their mode of living. Simon may have spent a little time on the island, but it was his brother, James, another renegade, who had a trading house on the north bend of the Maumee directly opposite the island. Here James engaged in traffic with the Indians. The only direct reference that could be found concerning Simon's visit at the island was a brief account in a newspaper article by Benton Orwig entitled, "The Truth about Girty." Mr. Orwig wrote: "After several invasions against the settlers in Kentucky and Ohio, Simon took his last stand along the Maumee Valley, allying himself with the strong lake tribes. It was at this time that Girty made his rendezvous at Girty's Island, which was really owned by James Girty. Simon and his brother had great carousals on the Island, and with their Indian aides consumed enough whiskey to float a ship. At first sign of attack, they would withdraw into the dense woods and underbrush and were safe from attacking forces. Napoleon then was but a few shacks and a crossroad. The Girtys and their pals often came to Napoleon and further to the mouth of the Maumee, though they were in danger from the Continental gun boats on Lake Erie."

CHURCHES

By 1882 there were seven major religious groups represented in Napoleon. Today we can count eleven. It is interesting to review the struggles of the early churches and how, sometimes by sheer determination, they were established.

METHODIST –

When Napoleon was first founded, Methodist services were held in private homes and in a tavern kept by Judge Craig. The first Methodist Church building was erected on the corner of Washington and Webster, the present site, in 1860. It was a frame structure and served the congregation until 1898.

On May 15, 1898 a new church of brick was built for the 205 members and this edifice served until January 1920 when it was destroyed by fire. The present beautiful structure was completed 1921–25 during Reverend Burton's pastorate. In 1962 a new educational unit comprising 15 classrooms and Sunday School made an important addition.

PRESBYTERIAN –

Presbyterian services were held in the courthouse and in St. John's Episcopal Church, Clinton and Scott Streets, when they were first organized. Then began the erection of a church building on a lot, corner of Washington and Webster, given them by Justin Tyler, first Mayor. Just before this building was completed, it was destroyed by a severe windstorm. Dedicated parishoners helped to clear the wreckage and a brick church was built. Somewhat later this building was dismantled and the present magnificent structure of Mansfield Sandstone was erected in 1901. This year, 1963, a new addition has been dedicated and conforms well in appearance to the impressive original structure.

ST. PAUL'S LUTHERAN CHURCH – Missouri Synod

The credit for the formation of St. Paul's Lutherans is given to Reverend A. W. Bergt of Fulton County in 1856. He became their first pastor the same year and remained six years, though he lived 15 miles away and had to travel back and forth through an almost trackless wilderness. In 1867 a church and pastor's residence was built on Monroe Street near Clinton and eighteen years later a parochial school was erected behind the church. St. Paul's present brick church on Clinton Street was built in 1904. An extensive building program is now underway at a new site, Glenwood Avenue, which will not only provide a new church but also a Christian Day School.

THE EMMANUEL LUTHERAN CHURCH –

The Emmanuel Lutherans were organized in 1882. At the start they rented and used St. John's Episcopal Church building. With the magnificent help of Henry Filling, Sr., the old Evangelical property, corner of Clinton and Scott Streets, was purchased, repaired, remodeled and used until 1915 when it was destroyed by fire. In 1918 the impressive building the Emmanuel Lutherans use today was erected.

THE CHRIST EVANGELICAL CHURCH –

When the Evangelical United Brethren Church was first established in 1872, there were nine members. The congregation first built a church in 1874 on the corner of Scott and Clinton; then sold it for $10,000.00 to the Emmanuel Lutherans. A new church was built on the site they now occupy and this was dedicated in 1898.

THE CATHOLIC CHURCH –

Visiting priests served Napoleon Catholics as far back as 1845. Through the noble efforts of Augustin Pilliod and James Brennan, a frame church was erected in 1858 for $500.00 on Hobson Street near East Main. It was named St. Augustine after Mr. Pilliod's patron saint. Reverend P. J. Carroll was the first resident pastor, followed by Father Moes; then by Father Michael Puetz in 1870. It was he who obtained the present property on Clinton and Monroe Streets. In 1878 a frame school and sister's residence were built. Five years later, 1883, Bishop Gilmore dedicated the present church, which cost $21,000.00. Prior to Father Puetz's death in 1925, a new brick school was built. The magnificent gothic church was built when brick were placed in walls for a contract price of $5.00 per thousand, including mortar. In order to raise money, a church fair was held in the Rink Opera House, Main and Scott.

One novel contest between John V. Cuff and Andrew Saygers was to see who could raise the most money for the church by the close of the fair. At the appointed time, it was deemed a tie, as each had the same amount. The toss of a coin decided the affair and Mr. Cuff was awarded a handsome Silver Service donated by Governor James Campbell of Ohio for the occasion. Both Mr. Saygers and Mr. Cuff were 32nd degree Masons.

EPISCOPAL CHURCH –

St. John's Episcopal Parish was first organized in 1853. The present church, corner of Scott and West Clinton, was erected in 1858 and is the oldest, also called by many "The most picturesque" religious church structure in Napoleon today. Maumee and Napoleon share the honor of having had the first Episcopalian units in Northwestern Ohio.

STANDING Left to Right: ACTING SOLICITOR JAMES DONOVAN, LAWRENCE HAASE, CITY MANAGER L. E. STARK, CLERK RICHARD TAYLOR, RICHARD FAHRINGER.
SEATED Left to Right: LEO SHONDELL, JR., WALTER HUSTON, MAYOR E. N. YEAGER, DONALD STEVENS, PAUL LEIFER.

NAPOLEON TODAY

By 1950, Napoleon officially became a city. The census at that time was close to 5,600. Today, in 1963, the population is nearly 7,000. The city is governed by a mayor, city manager, and six councilmen under a charter and has managed to remain nearly debt free.

The Napoleon area is known to be one of the richest agricultural areas in the United States. In addition to growing wheat, corn, etc., other crops have been grown, such as tomatoes and sugar beets, in more recent years. As a result of this, many Napoleon businesses are either directly or indirectly connected with farming.

Some of the old–established industries of the town which have remained in operation are the Heller–Aller Company and the Napoleon Products Company, originally known as the Morningstar. The Neuhauser Hatchery moved here from Ridgeville in 1923. Today Neuhauser Hatcheries, Inc. have thirty–six branch hatcheries; 31 in Ohio, Michigan and Indiana, one in New York and West Virginia; and three in Canada. Since World War II the Clevite–Harris Products Company and the Automatic Feed Company have established here.

The Campbell Soup Company, the largest single employer in the county, first came to Napoleon in 1948. The Company built its first plant in 1957 and now has twenty–five acres under roof. It also maintains its own waste plant and water plant. Last year, 1962, the Campbell Soup Company spent eight million dollars in the community, covering taxes, salaries, and employee benefits.

In addition to the Northwest–Signal, mentioned previously, the city has another daily newspaper, The Napoleon Daily News. This publication is owned by Mrs. Owen Thiel. It presents a lively news slant, plus other helpful community services.

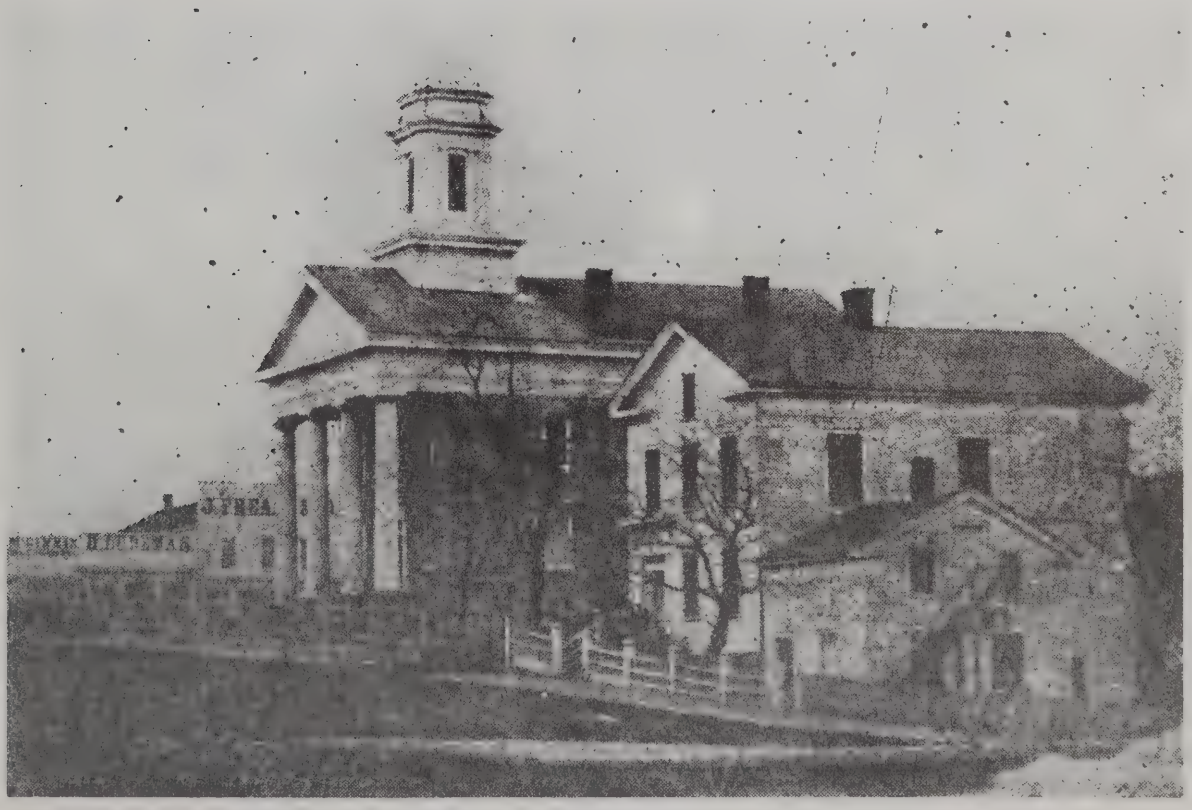
This year the Wellington Hotel was extensively renovated by its owner, William Reiter, a former resident of Napoleon.

Since 1948 Napoleon has had a new two–story, 45–bed hospital, which was built at a cost of nearly a half million dollars.

Napoleon lies 40 miles southwest of Toledo, 50 miles north of Lima, 65 miles east of Fort Wayne, and 130 miles west of Cleveland, Ohio. Two national highways, Routes 6 and 24, cross on the main corner of town, and two railways, the Wabash and the D. T. & I. pass through the town. An Ohio Turnpike entrance is but 12 miles north on Route 108.

Most of the events and occurrences of the past two decades are too close to be subjected to evaluation or historical comment today. Let it be said, however, that these years have brought changes and developments well beyond the dreams and hopes of our pioneer citizens in 1863. The few hundred courageous souls that met and organized the town of Napoleon, established a sound basis for growth that has been carried on from generation to generation. Napoleon citizens today are carrying on the tradition of their predecessors and are striving faithfully to turn over to the next generation an American heritage that remains noteworthy and meaningful.

MONROE STREET AT CANAL



HENRY COUNTY COURTHOUSE, DESTROYED BY FIRE IN 1878

S. M. HELLER HOME
Court house under construction in background

THE CANAL AT PERRY STREET

1928 – BRIDGE BEING REBUILT

SOUTHEAST NAPOLEON
Rowan home surrounded by wood fence

PERRY STREET LOOKING NORTH

Washington & Scott Streets
Site of Present Napoleon Post Office

JOE STOUT MANSION
Later owned by Geo. Egger

ROWAN HOME TODAY

SCOTT "CASTLE"

HARRISON HOME, Washington St.

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